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The Yale Reperatory Theatre's Production of *The Servant of Two Masters*

By Donald Titus

For the production of *The Servant of Two Masters* here at the Yale Reperatory Theatre the Scenic Designer Katherine Day incorporated in her design six wagons carrying various small-scale buildings, which became known as "tiny town." With advice from Lighting Designer Chuan-Chi Chan about which windows were to be lit, we budgeted the show, making sure that everyone involved understood that each wagon would be trailing a power cord for the lamps.

Once rehearsals began, Director Chris Bayes had the wagons and actors weaving around each other's paths. Given the show's high energy and quick pace, it became apparent that wireless dimming would be the best way to help the actors avoid tripping.

Knowing that City Theatrical has been in the forefront of wireless dimming for some time now I gave them a call. After explaining our production's needs and goals to City's Andrew Nikel, we were able to develop a plan that kept the designer's and director's ideas intact.

Thanks to City Theatrical we were able to equip all six wagons with the SHoW DMX® Wireless system. Since we were still in the process of building tiny town it was simple to switch over to 12v lamps. We used a combination of 12w and 25w automotive license plate lamps and sockets throughout the buildings, limiting each wagon to a total of 150w. The receiver, dimmer and battery were so compact that we had no trouble at all concealing them in and around tiny town. As a matter of fact the chargers were small enough that we also installed them on the wagons, so when it came time to recharge the batteries all that was needed was an extension cord.

Knowing from information in the user's manual that the 12Ah batteries we got from City Theatrical would give us about 25 minutes of power with a 150w load we knew that during intermission we would have to change out the batteries for the second act. Since the SHoW DMX Wireless system is equipped with RDM features we were able to monitor the battery power levels with our laptop and, true to the specifications, the batteries gave us exactly 25 minutes of power.

The SHoW DMX system is so easy to install and set up that the director was able to incorporate tiny town into the staging starting from the first technical rehearsal. The interaction between the wagons and the actors continued to change during techs as the director and cast made new discoveries. In the end, four of the wagons became stationary and all of the wagons were lit for most of the production, including the intermission preset.

We had to work around the fact that tiny town now had to be lit for a little over two hours. To accomplish this we removed the batteries from the four stationary wagons and replaced them with 12VDC transformers. We then added two batteries in parallel to the two wagons that still moved about the stage for a total of three batteries each, which got us through the show on one charge.

Given their experience in other theatres, the sound department was concerned that the wireless dimmers might cause interference with the wireless headset system we have. I am pleased to say that those concerns weren't borne out: SHoW DMX caused no interference whatsoever with any of the other wireless systems that we have.

For this production, we went through several looks, but thanks to the assistance from City Theatrical, we ended up being able to provide the designers with the effect they wanted and the director with the staging that he needed.



The Yale Rep team of Don Titus (Rep Lighting Supervisor), Hsiao-Ya Chen (Master Electrician) and Jason Wells (Rep staff Head Electrician) with some of the "Tiny Town"



Photo: Richard Termine



SHoW DMX gear on the set.



Tiny Town set



Photo: Richard Termine



Photo: Richard Termine